

IN THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently Amended) A stackable low depth case for retaining and transporting bottles, the case comprising opposing side walls and opposing end walls forming an outer shell, a case bottom disposed substantially within said outer shell, the case comprising:

~~each of~~ said side walls including a lower wall portion and a plurality of spaced upwardly projecting pylons, four corner pylons defining four corners of the case wherein the lower wall portion includes an upper edge and a lower edge, the upper edge having a curved shape substantially along the length thereof and the lower edge having a curved shape substantially along the length thereof; and

a plurality of spaced upwardly projecting columns generally disposed within the outer shell defining, in combination with the case bottom, said side walls, and said end walls, a plurality of bottle retaining pockets, said columns and said pylons extending above the lower wall portions and below a top surface of the retained bottles.

2. (Previously Presented) The stackable case of claim 1 wherein the upper and lower edges of the lower wall portion substantially define an exterior surface of said lower wall portion.

3. (Previously Presented) The stackable case of claim 2 wherein said lower wall portion further includes a plurality of retaining tabs substantially defining an interior surface of said lower wall portion and extending upwards from said case bottom.

4-11. (Cancelled)

12. (Previously Presented) A stackable low depth bottle case comprising:

a floor structure having an upper surface;

a pair of side structural members and a pair of end walls attached to the floor structure and defining an inner compartment with the floor structure, the side

structural members having a lower edge and an upper edge, wherein the side structural members are longer than the end walls;

a plurality of pylons extending inwardly from the side structural members into the inner compartment, and a plurality of corner pylons defining corners of the case and extending into the inner compartment; and

a plurality of longitudinally-spaced upwardly projecting columns generally disposed within the inner compartment defining, in combination with the floor structure and the side structural members, a plurality of bottle retaining pockets, each of the columns including at least one vertical, longitudinal recess opening upwardly and aligned with one another, each of the columns including a plurality of exterior surfaces each having an uppermost edge, each exterior surface partially defining one of the plurality of bottle retaining pockets, the uppermost edge of one of the exterior surfaces of one of the columns extending a first height above a first location along the upper edge of one of the pair of side structural members, wherein the first location is disposed between a pair of adjacent pylons, and the uppermost edge of one of the exterior surfaces of another of the columns extending a second height above a second location along the upper edge, wherein the second height is greater than the first height, wherein the second location is disposed between another pair of adjacent pylons, wherein at least one of the plurality of columns is located at the intersection of the case longitudinal axis and transverse axis and the uppermost edge of the exterior surface of the at least one of the plurality of columns is substantially co-planar with an uppermost edge of an exterior surface of one of the plurality of pylons, the exterior surface of the one of the plurality of pylons partially defining one of the plurality of bottle retaining pockets.

13. (Previously Presented) The case of claim 12, wherein each of the pair of side structural members is contoured along its length.

14. (Previously Presented) The case of claim 12, wherein the upper edge of each of the pair of side structural members is contoured along its respective length.

15. (Previously Presented) The case of claim 12, wherein the lower edge of each side structural member is wave-shaped along its respective length.

16. (Previously Presented) The case of claim 12, wherein the side structural members are attached to the floor structure by a plurality of retaining tabs which define an interior surface of the inner compartment between adjacent pylons.

17. (Cancelled)

18. (Previously Presented) The case of claim 12, wherein the plurality of columns are substantially the same height.

19. (Previously Presented) The case of claim 12, further comprising a pair of integrally molded handle structures directly connecting a pair of corner pylons and having an exterior surface and a generally open area being defined below the exterior surface.

20. (Previously Presented) The case of claim 12, wherein the floor structure has a substantially flat upper surface.

21. (Previously Presented) The case of claim 12, wherein the floor structure has a lower surface which includes plurality of bottle closure acceptance areas defined by generally conically shaped, concave portions.

22. (Previously Presented) The case of claim 12, wherein the floor structure includes resting and guiding means for resting the floor structure on the closures of bottles on which the case is stacked, the resting and guiding means including a rib formation having a longitudinal centerline offset from the centerline of the bottle retaining pockets to guide closures of bottles into a central region of the bottle retaining pockets.

23. (Previously Presented) The case of claim 22, wherein the rib formation comprises a cloverleaf shape.

24. (Previously Presented) The case of claim 12, wherein at least one of the columns has a vertically extending portion disposed below the lower edge of the side structural members.

25. (Previously Presented) The case of claim 12, wherein at least one of the columns has a vertically extending portion which is substantially co-planar with the lower surface of the floor structure.

26. (Previously Presented) The case of claim 12, wherein the plurality of pylons extend above the upper edge of the side structural members.

27. (Previously Presented) The case of claim 12, wherein the plurality of pylons have upper surfaces which are generally co-planar.

28. (Previously Presented) The case of claim 12, wherein the plurality of pylons and the plurality of columns have generally co-planar upper surfaces.

29. (Previously Presented) A low depth crate for storing and transporting bottles, the crate comprising:

a floor including a floor top surface having thereon a plurality of support areas for supporting an array of bottles;

a pair of side structural members and a pair of end walls attached to the floor and defining an inner compartment with the floor structure, the side structural members having a lower edge and an upper edge, wherein the side structural members are longer than the end walls;

a plurality of pylons extending inwardly from the side structural members into the inner compartment; and

a plurality of spaced upwardly projecting columns generally disposed within the inner compartment defining, in combination with the floor structure and the side

structural members, a plurality of bottle retaining pockets, wherein each of a pair of the columns is of substantially the same height, and extends to an uppermost surface that is a first height above a first location along the lower edge of one of the pair of side structural members, and wherein another one of the columns has an uppermost surface that is a second height above a second location along the lower edge, wherein the second height is different from the first height, wherein the uppermost surface of the another one of the columns is substantially co-planar with an uppermost surface of one of the plurality of pylons.

30. (Previously Presented) The crate of claim 29, wherein the side structural members are contoured along their respective lengths.

31. (Previously Presented) The crate of claim 29, wherein the upper edge of the one of the pair of side structural members is contoured along its respective length.

32. (Previously Presented) The crate of claim 29, wherein the lower edge of each side structural member is wave-shaped along its respective length.

33. (Previously Presented) The crate of claim 29, wherein the side structural members are attached to the floor structure by a plurality of retaining tabs which define an interior surface of the inner compartment between adjacent pylons.

34. (Previously Presented) The crate of claim 29, wherein the another one of the columns is located at the intersection of the case longitudinal axis and transverse axis.

35. (Previously Presented) The crate of claim 29, wherein the plurality of columns are substantially the same height.

36. (Previously Presented) The crate of claim 29, further comprising a plurality of corner pylons defining corners of the case and extending into the inner compartment.

37. (Previously Presented) The crate of claim 36, further comprising a pair of integrally molded handle structures extending between a pair of corner pylons and

having an exterior surface and a generally open area being defined below the exterior surface.

38. (Previously Presented) The crate of claim 29, wherein the floor has a substantially flat upper surface.

39. (Previously Presented) The crate of claim 29, wherein the floor has a lower surface which includes plurality of bottle closure acceptance areas defined by generally conically shaped, concave portions.

40. (Previously Presented) The crate of claim 29, wherein at least one of the columns has a vertically extending portion disposed below the lower edge of the side structural members.

41. (Previously Presented) The crate of claim 29, wherein at least one of the columns has a vertically extending portion which is substantially co-planar with a lower surface of the floor.

42. (Previously Presented) The crate of claim 29, wherein the plurality of pylons extend above the upper edge of the side structural members.

43. (Previously Presented) The crate of claim 29, wherein the plurality of pylons have upper surfaces which are generally co-planar.

44. (Previously Presented) The crate of claim 29, wherein the plurality of pylons and the plurality of columns have generally co-planar upper surfaces.

45. (Previously Presented) A stackable low depth bottle case comprising:

a floor structure having an upper surface;

a pair of opposed side structural members attached to the floor structure and defining an inner compartment with the floor structure, the side structural members having a lower edge and an upper edge;

a plurality of pylons extending inwardly from the side structural members into the inner compartment, and a plurality of corner pylons defining corners of the case and extending into the inner compartment; and

a plurality of spaced upwardly projecting columns generally disposed within the inner compartment defining, in combination with the floor structure and the side structural members, a plurality of bottle retaining pockets, wherein one of the columns extends a first height above a first location along the upper edge of one of the pair of side structural members, wherein the first location is disposed between a corner pylon and an adjacent pylon, and wherein the one of the columns extends a second height above a second location along the upper edge of the other side structural member directly opposite the first location, wherein the height of the first location and the height of the second location are vertically offset.

46. (Previously Presented) The case of claim 45, wherein the plurality of columns are substantially the same height.

47. (Previously Presented) The case of claim 45, wherein the plurality of pylons extend above the upper edge of the side structural members.

48. (Previously Presented) The case of claim 45, wherein the plurality of pylons and the plurality of columns are generally co-planar.

49. (Previously Presented) The case of claim 45, wherein at least one of the upper and lower edges of the side structural member is contoured along its length.

50. (Previously Presented) A stackable low depth bottle case comprising:

a floor structure having an upper surface;

a pair of side structural members attached to the floor structure and defining an inner compartment with the floor structure, the side structural members having a lower edge and an upper edge;

a plurality of pylons extending inwardly from the side structural members into the inner compartment, and a plurality of corner pylons defining corners of the case and extending into the inner compartment; and

a plurality of spaced upwardly projecting columns generally disposed within the inner compartment defining, in combination with the floor structure and the side structural members, a plurality of bottle retaining pockets, wherein a first column and second column each extend a first height above a predetermined first location along the upper edge of one of the pair of side structural members, wherein the predetermined first location is disposed between a pair of adjacent pylons, and wherein a third column is located at the intersection of the case longitudinal axis and transverse axis and extends a second height above a predetermined second location along the upper edge of the one of the pair of side structural members, wherein the second height is greater than the first height and wherein the second height to which the third column extends is substantially co-planar with an uppermost surface of one of the plurality of pylons.

51. (Previously Presented) The case of claim 50, wherein the plurality of columns are substantially the same height.

52. (Previously Presented) The case of claim 50, wherein the plurality of pylons extend above the upper edge of the side structural members.

53. (Previously Presented) The case of claim 50, wherein the plurality of pylons and the plurality of columns are generally co-planar.

54. (Previously Presented) The case of claim 50, wherein each of the upper and lower edges of the side structural members is wave-shaped along its length.

55. (Previously Presented) The case of claim 1 wherein a space between each adjacent pair of pylons along the side walls opens upwardly completely from the upper edge of the lower wall portion to a plane defined by uppermost surfaces of the adjacent pair of pylons to provide visibility of containers in the case.

56. (Previously Presented) The case of claim 1 wherein the side walls are longer than the end walls.

57. (Previously Presented) The case of claim 50 wherein the first location is different from the second location.

58. (Previously Presented) A low depth crate for storing and transporting bottles, the crate comprising:

a floor including a floor top surface having thereon a plurality of support areas for supporting an array of bottles;

a pair of side structural members and a pair of end walls attached to the floor and defining an inner compartment with the floor structure, at least one of the pair of side structural members having a lower edge and an upper edge;

a plurality of corner pylons defining corners of the case and extending into the inner compartment;

a plurality of pylons extending inwardly from the side structural members into the inner compartment between each pair of corner pylons on each side structural member; and

a plurality of spaced upwardly projecting columns generally disposed within the inner compartment defining, in combination with the floor structure and the side structural members, a plurality of bottle retaining pockets, wherein each of a pair of the columns is of substantially the same height, and extends to an uppermost surface that is a first height above a first location along the lower edge, and wherein another one of the columns has an uppermost surface that is a second height above a second location along the lower edge, wherein the second height is different from the first height, wherein the uppermost surface of the another one of the columns is substantially co-planar with an uppermost surface of one of the plurality of pylons.

59. (Previously Presented) A low depth crate for storing and transporting bottles, the crate comprising:

a floor including a floor top surface having thereon a plurality of support areas for supporting an array of bottles;

a pair of side structural members and a pair of end walls attached to the floor and defining an inner compartment with the floor structure, one of the side structural members having a lower edge and an upper edge, the end walls each including a handle;

a plurality of pylons extending inwardly from the side structural members into the inner compartment; and

a plurality of spaced upwardly projecting columns generally disposed within the inner compartment defining, in combination with the floor structure and the side structural members, a plurality of bottle retaining pockets, wherein each of a pair of the columns is of substantially the same height, and extends to an uppermost surface that is a first height above a first location along the lower edge, and wherein another one of the columns has an uppermost surface that is a second height above a second location along the lower edge, wherein the second height is different from the first height, wherein the uppermost surface of the another one of the columns is substantially co-planar with an uppermost surface of one of the plurality of pylons.

60. (Previously Presented) A stackable low depth case for retaining and transporting bottles, the case comprising opposing side walls and opposing end walls forming an outer shell, a case bottom disposed substantially within said outer shell, the case comprising:

each of said side walls including a lower wall portion and a plurality of spaced upwardly projecting pylons, four corner pylons defining four corners of the case, wherein the lower wall portion of at least one of the side walls includes an upper edge and a lower edge, the lower edge having a curved shape substantially along the length thereof; and

a plurality of spaced upwardly projecting columns generally disposed within the outer shell defining, in combination with the case bottom, said side walls, and said end walls, a plurality of bottle retaining pockets, said columns and said pylons extending above the lower wall portions and below a top surface of the retained bottles.

61. (Previously Presented) The case of claim 60 wherein the upper edge has a curved shape substantially along the length thereof.

62. (Previously Presented) The case of claim 60 wherein the lower edge curves convexly and concavely.

63. (Previously Presented) The crate of claim 29, wherein at least some of pylons and at least some of the plurality of columns have generally co-planar upper surfaces.

64. (Previously Presented) A low depth crate for storing and transporting bottles, the crate comprising:

a bottom portion having a top surface having thereon a plurality of support areas for supporting an array of bottles;

at least one side structural member attached to the bottom member and defining an inner compartment with the bottom member, the at least one side structural member having a lower edge and an upper edge;

a plurality of corner pylons defining corners of the case and extending into the inner compartment;

a plurality of pylons extending inwardly from the side structural members into the inner compartment between each pair of corner pylons on each side of the at least one structural member; and

a plurality of spaced upwardly projecting columns generally disposed within the inner compartment defining, in combination with the bottom member and the at least one side structural member, a plurality of bottle retaining pockets, wherein each of a pair of the columns is of substantially the same height, and extends to an uppermost surface that is a first height above a first location along the lower edge, and wherein another one of the columns has an uppermost surface that is a second height above a second location along the lower edge, wherein the first height is different from the second height, and wherein the uppermost surface of the another

on of the columns is generally co-planar with an uppermost surface of at least one of the plurality of pylons.